

Plurilingual and Intercultural Education in the Republic of Croatia: Educational Language Policy and Teachers' Competence

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Abstract

This paper investigates the legal framework governing the possibilities for implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education in foreign language teaching in the Republic of Croatia, the contents of initial and lifelong education programmes for students and foreign language teachers which enable them to implement plurilingual and intercultural teaching approaches, and the self-perception of 270 research participants, i.e. 180 foreign language teachers, 51 students of Philology (teacher training), 23 language instructors and 16 key education professionals about these approaches and their ability to implement them in future teaching situations. The analyses were conducted using an analytical matrix designed according to the Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures (Candelier et al., 2012). The results showed that legal presumptions for plurilingual and intercultural education exist in the Republic of Croatia, both in the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools and related regulations, and in the four analysed foreign language curricula, and that knowledge, attitudes and skills, which reflect plurilingual and intercultural education, are represented to varying degrees within all analysed study programmes.

Key terms: foreign language teaching; initial education; intercultural communication competence; language policy; plurilingual and intercultural teaching approaches

Sažetak

Ovim radom istražio se zakonski okvir koji uređuje mogućnosti za provedbu višejezičnoga i međukulturnoga obrazovanja u nastavi stranih jezika u RH, sadržaji programa inicijalnoga i cjeloživotnoga obrazovanja koji studente i učitelje stranih jezika osposobljavaju za primjenu višejezičnih i međukulturnih nastavnih pristupa te samopercepcija 270 sudionika istraživanja, od toga 180 učitelja, 51 studenta filološkog nastavničkog usmjerenja, 23 lektora te 16 ključnih stručnjaka za obrazovanje učitelja o tim pristupima i osposobljenosti za njihovu primjenu u nastavi. Analize su provedene pomoću analitičke matrice oblikovane prema Referentnom okviru za pluralističke pristupe jezicima i kulturama (Candelier et al., 2012). Rezultati su pokazali da u RH postoje zakonske pretpostavke za višejezično i međukulturno obrazovanje, kako u Zakonu o odgoju i obrazovanju u osnovnoj i srednjoj školi i njemu srodnim pravilnicima, tako i u četirima analiziranim kurikulumima stranih jezika te da su znanja, stavovi i vještine koje odražavaju višejezično i međukulturno obrazovanje u različitoj mjeri zastupljeni u svim analiziranim studijskim programima.

Ključne riječi: inicijalno obrazovanje; jezična politika; međukulturna komunikacijska kompetencija; nastava stranih jezika; višejezični i međukulturni nastavni pristupi

1. Introduction

Encouraging the development of individual plurilingualism and societal multilingualism, which includes preserving existing linguistic diversity both in individuals and societies and promoting foreign language learning, has been one of the Council of Europe's educational priorities for more

than two decades (see Velički, 2007; Lujić, 2016).¹ The abovementioned objective of the EU's language policy is achievable through plurilingual and intercultural education, which, according to Beacco and Byram (2007), should be achieved simultaneously through education *for* plurilingualism and interculturalism, and education *through* plurilingualism and interculturalism. This proposal was further clarified by Cavalli et al. (2009, p. 8) by defining plurilingual and intercultural education as

a general language education bridging all languages of instruction in school and all school subjects, thus shaping the basis for an identity open to plurality and linguistic and cultural diversity, insofar as languages are perceived as an expression of different cultures. All school subjects contribute to this type of language education through its contents and the ways in which they are taught. The aim of this education is the development of plurilingual and intercultural competence.

It is evident from this determinant that plurilingual and intercultural education should not refer exclusively to foreign language teaching, but to the entire school curriculum (cf. Petravić, 2016, p. 335) which should reflect all linguistic and cultural resources available to the school on an individual and collective level. At the same time, foreign language teaching is potentially a very potent medium for the implementation of both types of plurilingual and intercultural education. In foreign language teaching, education *for* plurilingualism and interculturalism is reflected in the content of the school subject—students learn an additional language while learning about a new culture. Education *through* plurilingualism and interculturalism should be reflected in the chosen teaching approach. The most well-known approaches that support the principles of education through plurilingualism and interculturalism are the so-called pluralistic approaches (fr. *approches plurielles*) which “aim to develop plurilingual and multicultural competence and differ from ‘individual teaching approaches’ in which the teaching approach takes into account only one language or one culture viewed in isolation” (Candelier et al., 2012, p. 6).

Despite the fact that the European Union, clearly like no other community, declared itself in favour of plurilingualism and plurilingual and intercultural education, the question arises whether, and to what extent, the results of the EU's efforts to promote plurilingual and intercultural education are visible in the Croatian education system.

Previous research on the representation of contents of plurilingual and intercultural education within the Croatian education system and individual attitudes and assessments of their own professional competence for a plurilingual and intercultural orientation in foreign language teaching has shown a partially favourable picture and indicated the need for additional research. Comparative research conducted by Cybulska and Kabalin Borenić (2014) among TEFL students at the MA level showed that students have favourable attitudes about plurilingualism and that they want to encourage plurilingualism in their teaching practice.

Research conducted by Knežević (2018) revealed positive attitudes among English and German language students about their own intercultural competence and its possible application in future teaching, although quantitative and qualitative analysis of English and German language study programmes established that “the contents for the development of intercultural competence are represented by a small number of cases, while the representation of contents for the development of plurilingual competence in almost all analysed study programmes is insignificant” (Knežević, 2018, p. 47). Knežević (2018) also states that previous foreign research suggests that “in the field of

¹ The importance of learning two other European languages in addition to his or her mother tongue has recently been re-emphasised and reaffirmed by the Proposal for a Council Recommendation: on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages COM (2018) 272 final.

plurilingual and intercultural competence, foreign language teachers do not sufficiently develop the competence necessary for the development of plurilingual and intercultural competence of students during their initial education” (p. 50) and concludes (p. 58) that it would be

necessary to examine university teachers, involved in the initial education of German and English language teachers, about the relationship between the contents listed in the study programmes and the contents that are processed in the implementation of the curriculum. Graduates, as well as teachers already working in practice, should also be questioned about their acquired competences for the development of plurilingual and intercultural competence during their studies.

The results of other research, which included the self-perception and the perception of foreign language teachers in Croatia among English language teachers (Breka, 2012; Breka & Petravić, 2015, Vickov, 2016) and German language teachers (Petravić & Šenjug Golub, 2016) in terms of the development of intercultural competence, showed that teachers recognise the importance of intercultural competence and express positive attitudes towards its implementation in foreign language teaching; however, “at the same time, they are uncertain about the implementation of this objective in their teaching practice” (ibid.), and “they encounter a number of obstacles in the classroom, such as the lack of appropriate teaching materials” (ibid., p. 30).

Given that the role of foreign language teachers is crucial in teaching a foreign language and plurilingual and intercultural competence and their explicit connection, as well as teachers’ competence and willingness to include activities for the development of plurilingual and intercultural competence in their classroom, in this research, we wanted to analyse two types of plurilingual and intercultural education in the Republic of Croatia. Firstly, we wanted to investigate the legislation which regulates the possibilities for the implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education in foreign language teaching. Furthermore, we were interested in the contents of initial and lifelong education programmes for students and teachers of foreign languages which enable them to implement plurilingual and intercultural education in foreign language teaching. Secondly, we wanted to examine the perceptions of language instructors and key education professionals, i.e. teacher educators, as well as the self-perception of current and future foreign language teachers about teaching approaches which promote the principles of plurilingual and intercultural education and learn more about their perceptions of their own education and training to implement such approaches to foreign language teaching.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Questions

In this paper, we will answer the following research questions:

- (RQ1) What are the legal possibilities for the implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education in the Croatian primary and secondary school system?
- (RQ2) Are the contents of plurilingual and intercultural education represented, and if so to what extent and in what way, in higher education institutions, i.e. in study programmes for teacher training where future foreign language teachers are educated?
- (RQ3) Are the contents of plurilingual and intercultural education represented, and if so to what extent and in what way, in the continual professional development of foreign language teachers?

(RQ4) What are the perceptions of language instructors and key education professionals, i.e. foreign language teacher educators, about pluralistic teaching approaches in foreign language teaching?

(RQ5) What are the perceptions of students of Philology (teacher training) and foreign language teachers about their level of competence to implement pluralistic teaching approaches in foreign language teaching?

2.2 Context and Participants

To better understand teacher education in the Croatian educational system, a short description of the beginning of their professional path is provided in the following section.

Foreign language teacher (FLT) qualifications and professional development are regulated by national acts and regulations. FLT's who work in primary and secondary schools need to complete a five-year study programme and have a master's degree in teaching foreign languages. Throughout their studies, future FLT's, among different theoretical subjects, attend professional-pedagogical practice and methodical exercises. Their study programme on MA level, in addition to their education related to a particular subject which will qualify them, includes pedagogical-psychological-didactical-methodological education upon completion of their study programme, to teach a particular language in primary school as well as in secondary school. After completing their studies, all new FLT's are required to complete a one-year induction program under the supervision of a teacher-mentor. At the end of this period, beginner teachers must pass the state certification examination in order to become fully qualified and certified. Teachers have the right and the obligation to pursue continual professional development and lifelong learning through programs approved by the Ministry.

The research included a total of 270 participants, 23 language instructors, 51 students of Philology (teacher training) and 16 key education professionals (hereinafter: methodologists) from six faculties, i.e. universities: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek, Faculty of Interdisciplinary, Italian and Cultural Studies in Pula, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split, University of Zadar and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. The other 180 participants consisted of foreign language teachers (hereinafter: teachers), employed in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia.

2.3 Research Instrument and Procedure

In order to answer the first research question, the analysis of the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (OG 87/8) and related regulations, and curricula for the following subjects: English language (OG 7/2019), French language (OG 7/2019), German language (OG 7/2019) and Italian language (OG 7/2019) was carried out. The answer to the second and third research questions came from the analysis of study programmes, i.e. the contents of the syllabi of compulsory and elective courses in teacher training at higher education institutions where future teachers of foreign languages are educated², and the analysis of the representation of listed topics and contents at

² The analysis includes all syllabi, i.e. all published syllabi of courses of individual parent studies (teacher training) publicly available on the website of the respective higher education institutions in May 2019, which refer to the 2018/2019 academic year. All core curriculum courses for the acquisition of teacher competences which are common to teacher training students of all study programmes of individual faculties or universities are excluded from the analysis. Moreover, considering this paper analyses <https://doi.org/10.18452/23379>

professional gatherings for foreign language teachers organised by the Education and Teacher Training Agency. These analyses were performed on the basis of an analytical matrix designed for the purposes of this research. The matrix consisted of 30 sub-descriptors of competences and resources from the *Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures. Competences and Resources* (Candelier et al., 2012), partly adapted for the purposes of this research (see Appendix 2). However, in this paper, it is considered, the same as in the paper of Petravić (2016, p. 162), that the mentioned framework offers “a solid reservoir of competence aspects of intercultural competence and a reference point for their integration into the development of intercultural competence not only in language education based on pluralistic approaches but also in traditional teaching focused on only one foreign language”. In selecting the sub-descriptors, special attention was paid to the resources which the authors of the framework identified as those that can be achieved almost exclusively in teaching by applying pluralistic approaches. The matrix consisted of 14 sub-descriptors related to Knowledge (K1-K14), 10 sub-descriptors related to Attitudes (A1-A10) and 6 sub-descriptors related to Skills (S1-S6). The analysis compares sub-descriptors from the analytical matrix with the educational outcomes of each version of the curriculum, i.e. with the contents and expected learning outcomes of individual courses on three-level assessment scales. A questionnaire was designed (see Appendix 1) to research the self-perception of students and teachers, i.e. the self-perception of their ability to implement plurilingual and intercultural education in foreign language teaching acquired through the initial and lifelong education and training. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The general part of the questionnaire consisted of questions about the socio-demographic data of the participants and general questions about the knowledge of pluralistic approaches and the desire to implement them in their own teaching. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions based on the same sub-descriptors used to create an analytical matrix in order to evaluate the level of competence (maximum, average and minimum) through a three-point Likert scale by which respondents assessed the extent to which the examined sub-descriptors were valid for them personally.

The questionnaires were created in digital form and distributed by e-mail to the target addresses of potential participants.

3. Results

3.1 Legal Possibilities for the Implementation of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education in Foreign Language Teaching in the Republic of Croatia

The analysis of the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (OG 87/8) and related regulations showed that legal presumptions for plurilingual and intercultural education exist in the Republic of Croatia. For example, Article 8 of the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (OG 68/18) states that teaching part of the school subjects and contents in primary and secondary schools, which are determined by the syllabus or the curriculum, can be conducted in one of the world languages in addition to the Croatian language with the approval of the Ministry (see the Regulation on teaching part of the subjects and contents determined by the curriculum in one of the

exclusively teacher training programmes for graduates who acquire the title of Master of Education in a particular language and literature, programmes which, among other things, enable graduates to teach languages at all educational levels, the study programmes of primary school teachers who acquire the title of Master of Education in Primary Education, i.e. programmes which offer Early foreign language teaching as one of the modules, are currently excluded from the analysis.

world languages in secondary school, OG 116/2016).³ Article 30.a of the same Act (OG 152/14) enables schools to conduct international curricula, i.e. curricula in a foreign language.⁴ Instructions for the implementation of a special programme of early foreign language learning in the first grade and elective foreign language subject in the fourth grade of primary school in the 2003/2004 school year prescribed compulsory learning of a foreign language from the first grade and enabled the choice of the second foreign language as an elective subject in the fourth grade. However, although good legal preconditions for learning foreign languages and developing personal plurilingualism exist in the Republic of Croatia, some authors warn of certain conditions that hinder their full implementation (see Pavičić, Bagarić, & Aleksa, 2006; Medved Krajnović & Letica, 2009; Lujić, 2016).

The analysis of foreign language curricula in the Republic of Croatia, which are legally valid and mandatory documents in all Croatian primary schools and gymnasiums from the 2019/2020 school year, showed that they promote knowledge, skills and attitudes which reflect plurilingual and intercultural education. Plurilingualism as a concept is mentioned in the introductory part of all curricula as a principle, purpose or goal of teaching a school subject. Among the methodological recommendations of all foreign languages, the importance of integrating plurilingual approaches is emphasised. Thus, for example, the French language curriculum states that “the teacher finds and applies teaching materials which provide an integrated approach to teaching the contents of other subjects using the French language”. Foreign language curricula also include contents aimed at developing intercultural communication competence. The introductory parts of the curriculum of all foreign languages state that

life in a plurilingual and multicultural world obliges educational systems to include the development of intercultural communication competence in the subject curriculum (...) at all levels and in all types of education to emphasise the importance of developing students’ self-awareness as an individual and a social being interested in familiarising with diversity and learning about diversity.

In this regard, intercultural communication competence is one of the three domains which represent key curriculum concepts. The abovementioned domain implies the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills which are crucial for the education of students as interculturally competent speakers.

The analysis of the educational outcomes of all curricula identified a measure to which they reflect the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures (2012) (see Table 1).⁵

³ In the Republic of Croatia in the 2018/2019 school year, a total of 10 schools, exclusively gymnasiums, with the consent of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, performed part of the subjects and contents determined by the curriculum in one of the world languages.

⁴ In the 2018/2019 school year, a total of 7 schools in the Republic of Croatia conducted the abovementioned, of which 6 were situated in the capital, Zagreb.

⁵ The research analysed those versions of the foreign language curriculum most common in the Croatian education system: for English language Primary School–70 hours per year and Gymnasium (ninth year of study)–105 hours per year, and for other foreign languages Primary School–70 hours per year, elective subject and Gymnasium–70 hours per year, elective subject.

	Knowledge	Attitudes	Skills
English language curriculum	2.57	2.8	1.83
French language curriculum	2.15	2.3	2.5
German language curriculum	2.35	2.3	2.16
Italian language curriculum	2.14	2.5	1.83

Table 1: Representation of knowledge, attitudes and skills of the Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures in the educational outcomes of foreign language curricula

Table 1 shows the mean values of the three categories (Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills) of the four foreign languages⁶. In the English language curriculum, the mean value of the Knowledge category is 2.57, which means that English language students have the opportunity to acquire almost all knowledge from the Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures (hereinafter: FREPA). The mean value of the Attitudes category is 2.8, which represents the highest value of the three examined categories. It is important to point out that some sub-descriptors are not achieved only by a single outcome in one year of study but through several of them and over several years. For example, the attitude “developing motivation to learn foreign languages” (A10) develops throughout primary education: in fourth grade “the student discusses the importance of learning foreign languages”, and in eight grade “the student respects the need to learn more foreign languages”. In the Skills category (M = 1.83), the only sub-descriptor which cannot be achieved through educational outcomes is the Observation, analysis and determination of linguistic elements and cultural phenomena in languages and cultures which are more or less familiar (S1).

The analysis of the French language curriculum showed that it enables the acquisition of almost all Knowledge tested in this questionnaire (M = 2.15) except knowledge of the construction of linguistic and cultural identity (K13) and knowledge about linguistic diversity, plurilingualism and multilingualism (K5). Comparison of the outcomes with the sub-descriptors of the Attitudes category (M = 2.3) showed that achieving the outcomes does not enable students to adopt a critical attitude towards languages (A5) and cultures, nor motivation to learn languages (A10). Even though the analysed curricula enable students to acquire almost all Skills (M = 2.5), the possibility of acquiring the linguistic mediation skill (S5) is provided neither in French students–beginner nor in Italian students–beginner.⁷

The analysis of the German language curriculum showed that students have the opportunity to acquire all Knowledge (M = 2.35) except knowledge about the continuous evolution of languages and cultures (K11). The mean values of the other two categories proved to be slightly lower, Attitudes M = 2.3, and Skills M = 2.16. It has been shown that the German language curriculum does not allow, for example, the acquisition of knowledge about the continuous evolution of languages and cultures (K11) and the skill of observing, analysing and determining linguistic elements and cultural phenomena in languages and cultures which are more or less familiar (S1).

⁶ Mean values on the three-point Likert scale.

⁷ It is important to point out that some students of these languages could still acquire the skill of linguistic mediation, but only if they continue to learn languages in secondary school.

In the Italian language curriculum, the mean value of the Knowledge category is 2.14, the Skills category 1.83 and the Attitudes category 2.5, which is also the highest of the three analysed categories. The analysis showed that the educational outcomes of this curriculum do not allow the acquisition of knowledge about the continuous evolution of cultures (K11), the construction of linguistic and cultural identity (K13) and how to learn a culture (K14) and communication skills in situations of contact between languages and cultures (S5).

Given the analysis presented above, the following conclusions can be made about the legal possibilities for the implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education in the Croatian primary and secondary school system (RQ1). All foreign language curricula, to a greater extent, allow the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills which are developed according to the FREPA pluralistic approaches. The similarity between the curricula is enabled through close cooperation between the expert working groups which developed the new curricula. On the other hand, the differences may be a result of the dissimilar education systems of the members of the expert working groups, as well as the differences in the methodologies of the analysed foreign languages. Since the research was conducted in the same year as the analysed curricula were published, it will be interesting to look at the results of self-assessment of foreign language teachers on competence or readiness to apply pluralistic approaches in their teaching practice, which will be discussed in the next subchapter.

3.2 Initial and Lifelong Education of Students and Teachers for the Implementation of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education in Foreign Language Teaching

3.2.1 Initial Education

The following section represents the contents of plurilingual and intercultural education in higher education institutions, i.e. in study programmes for future FLT's (RQ2). According to the abovementioned, this research includes an analysis of the representation of contents of plurilingual education in study programmes for teacher training at higher education institutions where future foreign language teachers are educated. As the analysis of four foreign languages curricula, this analysis included the contents of the syllabi of compulsory and elective courses for teacher training, i.e. graduate study programme in English, French, German and Italian language and literature at all higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia (see Table 2).⁸

⁸ It is important to emphasise that the nature of the corpus of study programmes differs significantly from that of the analysed curricula. Namely, the syllabi of the courses of certain higher education institutions are somewhat differently conceived in terms of content. For example, some syllabi contain more extensive learning objectives, tasks, and outcomes, while others contain somewhat less extensive descriptions of learning outcomes listing mostly course contents, either descriptively or by a list of weekly topics. Nevertheless, the analysis is based on the identification of key concepts and outcomes by appropriate comparative sub-descriptors, and the mean grade is formed with regard to their representation according to the number of analysed study programmes.

	Knowledge	Attitudes	Skills
Syllabi GP English language	2.07	2	1.83
Syllabi GP French language	2.28	2.17	2
Syllabi GP German language	2	1.88	1.5
Syllabi GP Italian language	2.14	2.01	2.01

Table 2: Representation of knowledge, attitudes and skills according to the Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures in foreign language study programmes for teacher training

By analysing the syllabi of compulsory and elective courses in a total of five graduate study programmes for teacher training in English language and literature⁹, it was determined that the predicted contents and learning outcomes through several courses are somewhat responsible for the realisation of sub-descriptors of the Knowledge (M = 2.07), Attitudes (M = 2) and Skill (M = 1.83) categories. For example, knowledge of how to learn a language (K7) is mostly represented in courses dedicated to mastering a foreign language in all five studies, while knowledge about linguistic diversity and plurilingualism (K5) and continuous language evolution (K4) is contained in courses on language contact, contact linguistics, language and society, bilingualism, etc. On the other hand, contents dedicated to the knowledge of the close connection between cultural and social diversity are underrepresented (K9). As far as attitudes are concerned, for example, the sub-descriptor A3 (discovering how one's own and other language(s) and culture(s) work(s)) fully corresponds to only one outcome ("influence of English on other European languages at lexical and other language levels..."), which is, as well as the remaining outcomes, oriented bilingually or biculturally, i.e. insisting on the comparison of only the source and target language ("... with special reference to the influence of English on the Croatian language"). The analysis of the Skills category showed that its sub-descriptors are the least represented compared to other categories. However, the outcome "to analyse grammatical gender divisions in different languages (English, Croatian, Italian)" is emphasised, which develops the skill of comparing linguistic and cultural features of different languages and cultures (S2).¹⁰

The analysis of the study programmes of compulsory and elective courses for a total of two graduate study programmes for teacher training in French language and literature¹¹ showed that, among all analysed study programmes, only the programme of French language provides contents (but not detailed outcomes, see footnote 8) through a single lecture which are closely related to plurilingual approaches (teaching multiple languages simultaneously). In this regard, the analysis

⁹ At the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek, the Department of Anglistics, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, the Department of Anglistics, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split, the Department of Anglistics, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb and the Department of Anglistics, University of Zadar.

¹⁰ It is also the only outcome of an English language course which explicitly includes a comparison of more than two languages.

¹¹ At the Department of Romance Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb and the Department of French and Francophone Studies, University of Zadar.

shows a slightly higher mean value of the Knowledge category ($M = 2.29$) compared to other language studies analysed. This is evidenced by the contents “pluralistic approaches”, “teaching plurilingual and multicultural competence”, “bilingual development” or “bilingualism and plurilingualism: cognitive, social and educational approach”, as well as “bilingualism and plurilingualism: definition, cognitive and social advantages”, which correspond to the sub-descriptors of knowledge about linguistic diversity, plurilingualism, and multilingualism (K5). The mean value of the Attitudes category is 2.17, while the analysis of the Skills category shows that its sub-descriptors are still the least represented (compared to other categories) and its mean value is 2. Both study programmes, to some extent, envisage the development of the skill of using already acquired knowledge and skills in one language in activities of comprehension or production in another language (S4, outcomes such as “juxtaposing French and Croatian language structures and realising interference difficulties”), and other skills to a lesser extent.

The analysis of study programmes of compulsory and elective courses in a total of four graduate study programmes for teacher training in German language and literature¹², showed that the predicted contents and learning outcomes are somewhat responsible for the realisation of sub-descriptors of the Knowledge ($M = 2$), (to a lesser extent) Attitudes ($M = 1.88$), and Skills ($M = 1.5$) categories. In the Knowledge category, the outcome “acculturation/integration/assimilation/separation/marginalisation” is especially emphasised, which corresponds to the development of knowledge on how to learn a culture (K14), contained in a course dedicated to the analysis of intercultural competence and communication, as well as “mediation of civilisation/culture in foreign language teaching”, “cultural standards and stereotypes” for developing knowledge of the role of culture in intercultural relations and communication (K10). In terms of skills, no course explicitly envisages outcomes for comparing the linguistic and cultural features of different languages and cultures (S2), while different study programmes to some extent develop the skill of using already acquired knowledge and skills in one language in activities of comprehension or production in another language (S4, e.g. “types of reading and strategies of comprehension of written text”, “influence of mother tongue and other languages, the notion of interference”).

The analysis of study programmes of compulsory and elective courses in a total of five graduate study programmes for teacher training in Italian language and literature or Contemporary Italian Philology¹³ showed a slightly higher representation of sub-descriptors of all three categories compared to English and German. Thus, with the predicted contents and learning outcomes, almost all sub-descriptors of the Knowledge category are achieved to some extent ($M = 2.14$). As for the Attitudes category, the mean value is 2.01. An outcome which seeks to develop an awareness of the

¹² At the Department of German Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek, the Department of Germanistics, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, the Department of Germanistics, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb and the Department of Germanistics, University of Zadar.

¹³ At the Department of Italian Language Studies, Faculty of Interdisciplinary, Italian and Cultural Studies in Pula, the Department of Italianistics, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, the Department of Italianistics, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split, the Department of Italianistics, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb the Department of Italianistics, University of Zadar. Since we were not able to access the detailed contents of the syllabi (teaching contents and learning outcomes) of general and methodological courses from the graduate study programme in Italian language and literature, the Department of Italian, Faculty of Humanities, University of Pula, this analysis excludes this study programme. In addition, this study programme is not declared in its entirety as a teacher training course (students at the end of their studies acquire the title of Master of Italian Philology and not of Master of Education in Italian Philology).

existence of linguistic, cultural and human diversity within society or a particular group (A2) is distinguished among the other outcomes, and it reads “to state and explain the essential characteristics of an intercultural competent teacher for work in culturally plural classes (environments) and their importance in promoting fundamental human values”. The analysis of the Skills category showed the same representation of sub-descriptors as for the Attitudes category ($M = 2.01$), and it seems interesting to emphasise the outcomes of two courses of different study programmes: “barriers in intercultural communication”, i.e. “language conflict issues” which predict developing the skill of mediating aspects of one’s own language and culture or other languages and cultures (S3).

Given the presented analysis, it is possible to conclude that the syllabi of all study programmes for teacher training of the abovementioned four foreign languages, to a certain extent, (cf. Knežević 2018, p. 47: “not (...) to a sufficient extent”) enable the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills which are predicted by the pluralistic approaches, with total values of 2.12 for Knowledge, 2.01 for Attitudes and 1.83 for Skills. However, none of the analysed study programmes envisages a separate course dedicated to plurilingual education and the implementation of its contents and approaches in teaching, but, as the analysis proves, the contents of the sub-descriptor (more or less explicitly expressed) can be found in several courses. The analysis also demonstrates that these contents are mostly represented in elective courses (namely those dedicated to contact/contrastive linguistics or intercultural communication), while to a lesser extent they form part of the compulsory courses in foreign language teaching theory and methodology. Some knowledge (K1, knowledge of the principles of how language works) or skills (S5, communication in situations of contact between languages and cultures) are most prevalent in courses dedicated to language practice of certain foreign languages offered in most study programmes. Finally, it is important to point out that, due to the fact that the analysed study programmes teach target foreign languages, the contents of the vast majority of courses were created in a bilingual and bicultural atmosphere, i.e. dedicated to comparisons of exclusively mother tongue and target foreign language (which were included in existing descriptor analysis, i.e. provided by certain sub-descriptors).

3.2.2 Lifelong Education

Insight into the review of professional training programmes organised by the Education and Teacher Training Agency in the past few years for foreign language teachers (hereinafter: ETТА) revealed that professional training programmes on “interculturalism” and “plurilingualism” were represented at the national level for all foreign languages (RQ3).¹⁴

In addition, in the 2018/2019 school year, during the preparation for the implementation of the national project “School for Life”, all foreign language teachers in the Republic of Croatia had the opportunity to participate in Loomen, a mass national online course in which one of the topics was intercultural communication competence.

¹⁴ Some of the professional training programmes were titled: Intercultural elements in French language teaching, Interlingual understanding of Romance languages as a new method of learning and teaching, Plurilingualism as a resource, Development of intercultural competences and cross-curricular topics according to tolerance values, Plurilingualism: from EU policy to classrooms, CLIL, Plurilingual and intercultural competences: descriptors and teaching materials, Development of plurilingual competence of students—challenges for teacher education with regard to educational levels, Adaptation of source materials for the development of intercultural competence, etc. The data were provided by several ETТА foreign language advisors.

3.3 Methodologists, Language Instructors, Teachers and Students on Plurilingual and Intercultural Education

The second part of the research answered RQ4: What are the perceptions of language instructors and key education professionals, i.e. foreign language teacher educators, about pluralistic teaching approaches in foreign language teaching? And RQ5: What are the perceptions of students of Philology (teacher training) and foreign language teachers about their level of competence to implement pluralistic teaching approaches in foreign language teaching?

The results (see Table 3) showed that among the four groups of respondents, methodologists know the most about pluralistic approaches (62.5%). On the other hand, the vast majority of Croatian foreign language teachers (73.3%), as well as language instructor (69.6%) and students (68.6%), have heard of pluralistic approaches, but do not know them in detail. Such results, especially for a group of teachers, are not surprising. Namely, pluralistic approaches are a new approach in foreign language teaching, which the vast majority of Croatian teachers did not even have the opportunity to learn during their initial education. Therefore, it seems necessary to further educate the three abovementioned groups, both at the initial level and within the framework of professional development activities.

Participants (N)	Knowledge of pluralistic approaches		
	I know a lot about it	I have heard of it but do not know them in detail	I have not heard of it
Methodologists (16)	62.5%	37.5%	-
Language instructors (23)	21.7%	69.6%	8.7%
Teachers (180)	16.1%	73.3%	10.6%
Students (51)	13.7%	68.6%	17.6%

Table 3: Comparative presentation of the assessed self-perception of methodologists, language instructors, teachers and foreign language students on the knowledge of pluralistic teaching approaches

The results also demonstrated that the majority of language instructors (69.6%) and an even larger share of surveyed teachers (76.1%) would like to implement pluralistic approaches in their teaching. However, as can be seen in Table 4, not all participants consider themselves to be fully competent to implement pluralistic approaches in teaching.

	Level of competence for the implementation of pluralistic approaches in teaching		
	Maximum	Average	Minimum
Language instructors	47.8%	43.5%	8.7%
Teachers	39.4%	57.2%	3.3%
Students	35.3%	41.2%	23.5%

Table 4: Comparative presentation of self-perception of teachers and future foreign language teachers' level of competence for the implementation of pluralistic teaching approaches in foreign language teaching

While 39.4% of teachers consider they possess the highest level of competence in teaching a foreign language in accordance with the principles of a pluralistic approach, the majority (57.2%) considers they possess the average level of competence (cf. Petravić & Šenjug Golub, 2016) or a minimum level of competence (3.3%). Such data indicate that additional education of foreign language teachers is necessary if they are to be trained to organise classes which would involve the use of several, or, at least, more than one, versions of languages or cultures simultaneously including the mother tongue. Only a slightly larger share of language instructors (47.8%) consider they possess the highest level of competence in teaching a foreign language in accordance with the principles of a pluralistic approach, approximately the same number (43.5%) considers they possess the average level of competence, while a few consider they possess a minimum level of competence (8.7%). On the other hand, just over a third (35.3%) of student respondents estimate that faculty courses have trained them to implement pluralistic approaches in foreign language teaching, while 41.2% are unsure and 23.5% believe they are not competent. Surprisingly, language instructors, teachers and students, on the one hand, feel that they do not know enough about pluralistic approaches while on the other hand, they consider themselves competent to implement these approaches in the classroom. More data would need to be available and a more detailed analysis conducted to determine the real cause of the discrepancy between the self-assessment of knowledge about pluralistic approaches and the competence to apply them.

If we compare these data with the results of the curriculum analysis according to which the contents of plurilingual and intercultural education are represented in the contents of initial education, one possible explanation is that the link between pluralistic approaches and plurilingual and intercultural education is not entirely clear to students.

Respondents also assessed their teaching contribution to the development of some types of plurilingual and intercultural education (see Table 5).

Participants (N)	Knowledge	Attitudes	Skills
Methodologists (16)	2.30	2.53	2.36
Language instructors (23)	2.47	2.65	2.49
Teachers (180)	2.40	2.71	2.59
Students (51)	2.68	2.74	2.61

Table 5: Self-perception of types of plurilingual and intercultural education to which their teaching contributes

As is evident in Table 5, all four groups of respondents believe that their teaching enables the acquisition of plurilingual and intercultural attitudes the most, the development of such skills to a lesser extent, and the acquisition of such knowledge the least. It was shown that students have the most positive self-perception of the possible implementation of certain plurilingual and intercultural contents and activities in foreign language teaching. Considering students have not yet found themselves in an actual teaching situation, such a result is not surprising.

The research also attempted to find out what the respondents believe can be, the most or the least, acquired in their teaching, i.e. exactly what specific knowledge, attitudes and skills. Unlike methodologists, the other three groups of respondents believe that their teaching enables the acquisition of knowledge of the principles of how language works (K1) the most, and knowledge about how to learn a culture (K14) the least.

In terms of attitudes, all surveyed groups believe that their teaching enables the acquisition of attitudes about respect to foreign languages, cultures and persons (A1) and the development of awareness of the existence of linguistic, cultural and human diversity (A2) the most, and the development of self-confidence and readiness to engage in a situation of communication (A7) the least. These results clearly indicate the specific areas which need to be further taught in teacher training and within the framework of professional training programmes in order for current and future teachers to strengthen the existing competence of teaching plurilingual and intercultural competence.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we investigated legal presumptions for the implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education in foreign language teaching and the contents of the initial and lifelong education programme for students and teachers of foreign languages. We also examined the self-perception of language instructors, methodologists and current and future foreign language teachers about teaching approaches which promote the principles of plurilingual and intercultural education as well as their self-perception of ability to implement such approaches in foreign language teaching.

The results showed that legal presumptions for plurilingual and intercultural education exist in the Republic of Croatia, both in the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools and related regulations, and in the four analysed foreign language curricula. The curriculum analysis showed that more importance is given to intercultural education rather than plurilingual education. This result came as no surprise; it represents the expected result of many years of professional and research

work of European and Croatian scientists and practitioners which emphasised the importance of developing intercultural communication competence. The comparative analysis of the representation of knowledge, attitudes and skills, which reflect plurilingual and intercultural education in the educational outcomes of the analysed curricula, showed that the greatest importance was attached to attitudes, then knowledge and to a lesser degree on skills. In some of the following research, it would be interesting to identify differences in the prevalence of outcomes of pluralistic approaches between old curricula (current until 2018) and new curricula to demonstrate more clearly the modernisation of this aspect of language education in the Republic of Croatia.

The analysis of the representation of contents of plurilingual and intercultural education in study programmes for teacher training at higher education institutions, where future foreign language teachers are educated, showed the highest representation of knowledge, then attitudes and then skills, implying, however, monolingual, i.e. necessary bilingual and bicultural habitus (the comparison of only the source and target language of the study programme).

The research also showed that in the last few years, foreign language teachers, in addition to initial education, in the field of plurilingual and intercultural education have had the opportunity to improve their skills in programmes approved by the competent Ministry of Science and Education. It would be interesting to know to what extent the teachers who participated in this research acquired their knowledge of pluralistic approaches and plurilingual and intercultural education within their initial education, and how much through the framework of professional development. Likewise, it would be interesting to investigate whether teachers are trained independently within the framework of research topics and outside of approved programmes, either by studying professional literature, participating in professional gatherings organised by other institutions, or attending online courses.

However, some limitations of this study should not be neglected. The main limitation of this research is the application of the three-level Likert scale, which did not allow a more detailed statistical analysis, which would contribute to greater reliability and validity of the results, and thus the quality of their interpretation.

Finally, this research confirmed the strong connection between the EU's language policy and the Republic of Croatia, which had already been established by previous research, and indicated a somewhat less strong connection between curricula contents and teacher competences. Assuming that the success of foreign language teaching is reflected in a well-coordinated relationship between the competence profile of a foreign language teacher and curricula contents, the importance of this research is that it points to these discrepancies. Such a form of inconsistency at the micro level can lead to dissatisfaction of all or some actors, and at the macro level to unsatisfactory educational outcomes, which, ultimately, can have a negative impact on society. Namely, as pointed out ten years ago in the White paper on intercultural dialogue (2008): plurilingual and intercultural competence is not only a precondition for successful communication in different intercultural situations but is an integral part of social and civic competence. Therefore, it is up to all key actors to apply this knowledge in their professional field in order to improve the quality of results in foreign language teaching, and thus raise the quality of intercultural encounters and relations on the local, national and global scene.

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Appendix 1

1. Have you heard of pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures? (for all four groups of respondents)

- ☐ I know a lot about it
- ☐ I have heard of it but do not know them in detail
- ☐ I have not heard of it

2. Unlike “individual” didactic approaches which take into account only one language or one particular culture viewed in isolation, pluralistic approaches seek to encourage the development of plurilingual and multicultural competence of students which includes the use of several, at least, more than one, versions of languages or cultures simultaneously including the mother tongue. Would you like to apply pluralistic approaches in your teaching? (for teachers and language instructors)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ No

3. How would you describe your level of competence in teaching a foreign language in accordance with the abovementioned principles of pluralistic approaches? (for teachers and language instructors)

- ☐ Maximum
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Minimum

4. Do you believe that the way you teach a foreign language enables students to acquire some of the following knowledge, attitudes and skills: (...) (for teachers and language instructors)

5. Do your courses enable the acquisition of competences which enable students to teach a foreign language by providing students with some of the following knowledge, attitudes and skills: (...) (for methodologists)

6. Do you consider yourself competent to design foreign language class which will enable students to acquire the following knowledge, attitudes and skills: (...) (for students)

Appendix 2

Knowledge

K 1. Knowledge of the principles of how language works

(language functioning in accordance with rules and norms; different language functioning in spoken and written forms)

K 2. Knowledge about the role of society in the way languages work and vice versa

(language variations, e.g., regional, social, generational)

K 3. Knowledge of the principles of how communication functions

(existence of other forms of communication besides language (non-verbal, animal); better understanding of one's own communication repertoire and awareness of the need to adapt to the social and cultural context)

K 4. Knowledge of the continuous evolution of languages

(interconnectedness of language with "kinship" relationships and belonging to language "families"; the phenomenon of "borrowing" between languages)

K 5. Knowledge about linguistic diversity, plurilingualism, and multilingualism

(existence of many languages in the world as well as plurilingual and multilingual situations in our own environment and elsewhere)

K 6. Knowledge about the existence of affinities and differences between languages, linguistic variations, and cultures

(every language and every culture have its way of perceiving reality; affinities and differences between one's own and other cultures)

K 7. Knowledge of how one acquires a language

(language learning is a long and exhausting process; reliability in affinity between languages; awareness of the importance of a positive attitude towards language differences)

K 8. Knowledge about cultures

(existence of many cultures which are more or less different; members of different cultures may perceive other cultures differently)

K 9. Knowledge of the close connection between cultural diversity and social diversity

(division of culture into several subcultures; a better understanding of the characteristics of one's own cultural environment)

K 10. Knowledge of the role of culture in intercultural relations and communication

(impact of knowledge or perceptions of other cultures, including stereotypes, on intercultural relations and communication; awareness of one's own reaction to linguistic or cultural differences)

K 11. Knowledge of the continuous evolution of cultures

(culture is created under the influence of various factors, e.g. history, environment, actions of community members; cultures can influence each other)

K 12. Knowledge about the diversity of cultures

(culture and country, that is, culture and language, are difficult to distinguish; cultural diversity does not imply the superiority or inferiority of any culture in relation to the others)

K 13. Knowledge of the construction of linguistic and cultural identity

(identity is constructed on different levels, e.g. national, supranational; a person always belongs to various (sub)cultures and can have multiple identity)

K 14. Knowledge of how one acquires a culture

(belonging to a culture is the result of a long, mostly subconscious process of learning; one is never obligated to adopt the behaviours and values of another culture)

Attitudes

A 1. Positive acceptance with respect to foreign languages, cultures and persons

(all people, cultures and languages are equally valuable; respect for human dignity and human rights)

A 2. Sensitivity to the existence of linguistic, cultural and human diversity

(awareness of the linguistic and cultural diversity present in a society or in the classroom)

A 3. Curiosity about foreign languages, cultures and persons, pluricultural contexts and linguistic cultural and human diversity

(discovering the interaction of one's own and other language and culture; understanding the affinities and differences between one's own language and culture and the target language and culture)

A 4. Positive acceptance of linguistic and cultural diversity

(acceptance of the importance of all languages and cultures (and minorities); openness to others; motivation for plurilingual and multicultural socialisation)

A 5. Critical attitude towards languages and cultures

(critical attitude towards one's own values and norms and the values and norms of others)

A 6. Being ready to go through the process of adaptation to another language or culture

(being ready to put oneself in the place of the other; adapting one's own behaviour in interaction when interacting with persons who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself)

A 7. Being self-confident and feeling at ease in a situation of communication

(self-confidence in a situation of communication; confidence in one's own language skills; self-confidence when analysing lesser-known or unfamiliar languages)

A 8. Assuming one's own linguistic and cultural identity

(acceptance of oneself as a member of a social, cultural and linguistic community; an openness to enrichment which can lead to contact with other languages and cultures)

A 9. Sensitivity to experience

(assigning value to linguistic knowledge and skills irrespective of the context in which they have been acquired; being ready to learn from one's errors)

A 10. Motivation to learn languages

(a positive attitude towards the learning of languages and the speakers who speak them; a wish to perfect one's mastery of the mother tongue; a desire to learn other languages; lifelong language learning)

Skills

S 1. Observation, analysis and determination of linguistic elements and cultural phenomena in languages and cultures which are more or less familiar

(make use of a familiar language and culture in the analysis of another language and culture; understanding a particular social phenomenon as a consequence of cultural difference; use of linguistic similarities for the purpose of facilitating communication)

S 2. Comparison of linguistic and cultural features of different languages and cultures

(identifying affinities and differences between languages and cultures; comparing one's own language behaviour with the behaviours of speakers of other languages)

S 3. Mediation of aspects of one's own language and culture or other languages and cultures

(clarifying an element of one's own culture to a foreign interlocutor or clarifying an element of another culture to an interlocutor from one's own culture; prejudices and misunderstandings arising from culture; cultural diversity and one's own opinion about it)

S 4. Use of already acquired knowledge and skills already mastered in one language in activities of comprehension or production in another language

(constructing a set of hypotheses about affinities and differences between languages; construction of interlingual or intralingual transfers; can identify reading strategies in the first language and apply them to the second language)

S 5. Interaction in situations of contact between languages and cultures

(communication in bi/plurilingual groups; linguistic mediation)

S 6. Use of linguistic elements, cultural references or behaviours which belong to more or less familiar languages and cultures

(use of knowledge and skills acquired in one language in order to learn another language; profiting from previous intercultural experiences to enrich his or her intercultural competence)